

IRON WORK FARM in ACTON, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1111  
Acton, MA 01720

4/7/03 (1)

April 4, 2003

Board of Selectmen  
Town of Acton  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

To the Board:

Directors of the Iron Work Farm have looked over the additional submittal by the developers of 136 Main Street in regard to their Site Plan, Application #12/20/02-387.

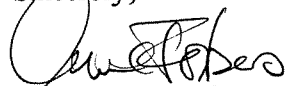
The new perspective drawings do not appear to give a true impression of the bulk of Building #1 (138 Main St.) in relation to its neighbors. In fact, with a façade that is 37 feet wide, its width rivals that of the Universalist Church/Music School (which is 40', not the 42' listed on the Analysis,) and even of Exchange Hall, where the façade is 39 feet. And if the heights listed on the Analysis sheet are correct, at 38 feet in height it will be the highest building on the immediate streetscape. The next highest are 35 feet--the church/music school and the gray house at 131 Main St. (That building appears to be listed erroneously as 127 Main St.; also, it has no association with Iron Work Farm.)

The Analysis sheet is also somewhat deceptive, not just because of its numerous errors ("Exchange Place" must mean Exchange Hall, for instance), but because in recording length and depth the chart includes all building appendages, no matter how low or insignificant they are. 2 Central Street looks quite large on the list, for instance. In fact, its gabled front wall is only 26 feet wide. The measurements on the list include attachments such as the low south porch and the northwest addition, which do not add much to the feeling of building mass. Similarly, the main block of Jones Tavern facing Main St. is 40 feet wide, not the 64 that is listed in the analysis.

The fact is, Building #1 is projected to be a very large, bulky structure which will dwarf its immediate neighbors in a particularly alarming way. Although the church and Exchange Hall are larger gable-front buildings, they are truly South Acton icons, and *should* dominate the village to a certain extent. Their traditional function as monumental public buildings fits into the context of the neighborhood in a way that this new building will not.

We believe that reducing the overall scale of Building #1 by even a few feet in width and height, and by length if that is workable with the projected use, will go a long way toward helping it, in the words of Sect. 10.4.3.9 of the Zoning Bylaw, relate "harmoniously to . . . the scale and architecture of existing buildings in the village," and to contribute to, rather than conflict with, the South Acton Village character. Such a reduction should also help to address some of the concerns already expressed by both Selectmen and staff about the tightness and constriction of circulation around the building.

Sincerely,



Anne Forbes, Secretary  
Iron Work Farm in Acton